

# Animal Autographs

Many reference books contain sketches of animal tracks, but tracks in the field rarely look like those found in texts. Dust can make an animal track look one way, sand or mud another. An unrushed animal has one way of walking. The autograph its feet leave when in a hurry is quite different.

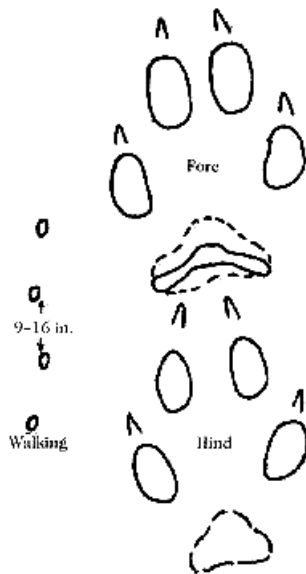
This field guide takes all of these differences into account. It originally was created to aid department biologists with yearly surveys along Missouri streams to determine furbearer populations. This set of pictures of animal tracks--or autographs--are drawn to the size of average adults. Young animals' tracks are slightly smaller.



The solid lines represent those parts of a track which usually are evident. Dotted lines indicate parts which don't show under normal conditions. They are truly animal autographs.

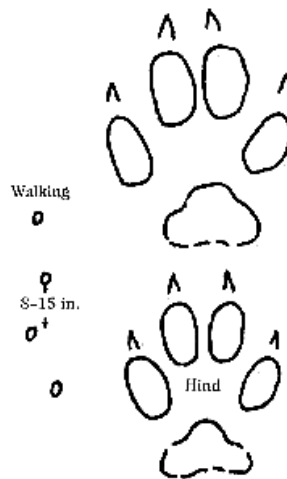
## RED FOX

- **Weight: 8-14 lbs.**
- **Foot hair may show in pad marks.**
- **Bear-like imprint**



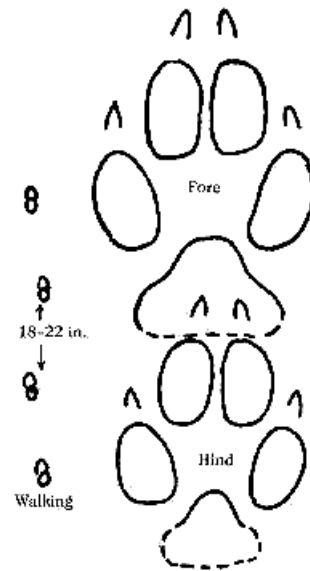
## GRAY FOX

- **Weight: 7-12 lbs.**
- **Similar to summer coyote pups.**



## COYOTE

- **Weight: 20-35 lbs.**

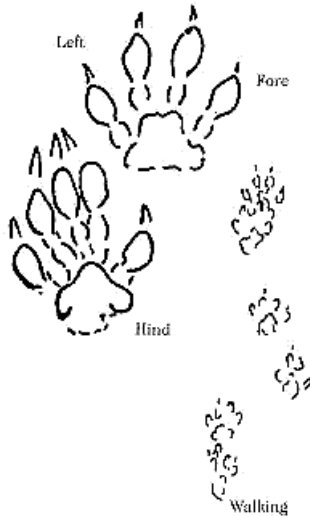


## STRIPED SKUNK

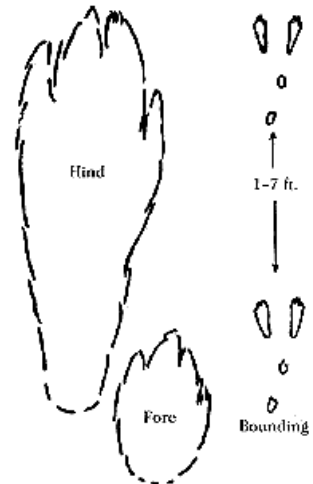


## WOODCHUCK

- Tracks scarcely ever well-defined.

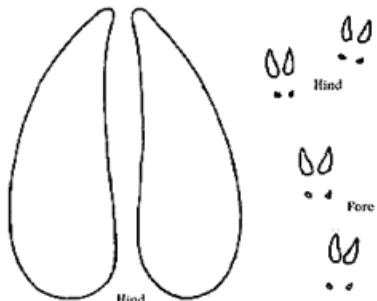


## COTTONTAIL RABBIT



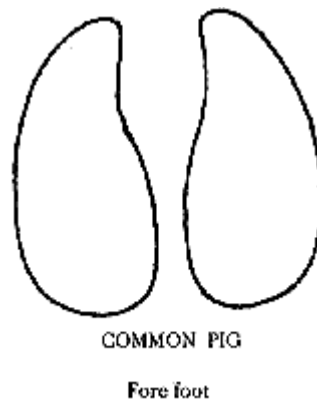
## WHITE-TAILED DEER

- Heart-shaped, toes pointed
- Toes spread and dew claws may show when bounding on mud or snow.
- 10 to 15 feet between bounds.



## COMMON PIG

- Toes blunt



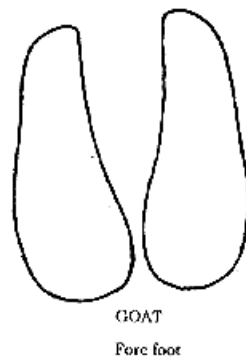
## BOBCCAT



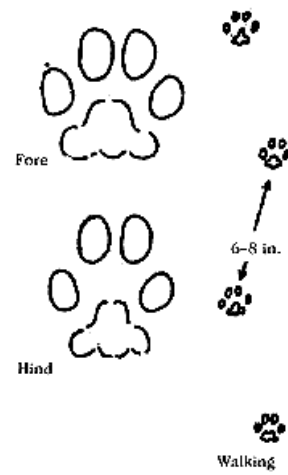
## SHEEP



## GOAT



## HOUSE CAT

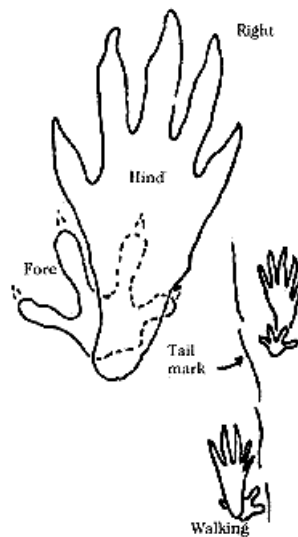


## DOG



## MUSKRAT

- Look for cuttings and scat at water's edge.

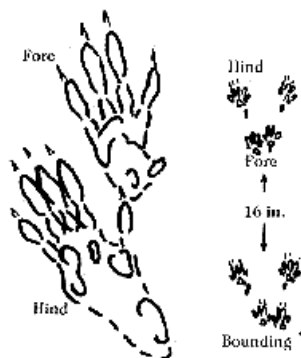


## RACCOON

- Like small bare hands.



## FOX SQUIRREL



## GRAY SQUIRREL

- Similar to FOX SQUIRREL but smaller.

## OPOSSUM



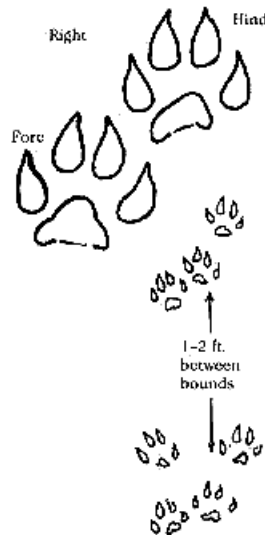
## WEASEL

- As in mink, only 4 to 5 toes show, but about one-half the size of mink.



## MINK

- Like cat but with toenails.
- Toenails and pads usually make combined print.
- Only 4 to 5 toes show.



# Track Comparisons

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**MOUNTAIN LION (sub-adult male)**  
**Left HIND Foot**



**MOUNTAIN LION (sub-adult male)**  
**Right FRONT Foot**

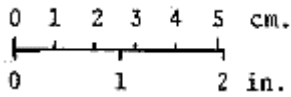


Fig. 1. Comparison of a left hind foot track with a right front foot track of a 44 kg (97 lbs.) sub-adult male Mountain Lion.

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**MOUNTAIN LION**  
**Right HIND Foot**



**DOG**  
**(german Shepherd, average size)**

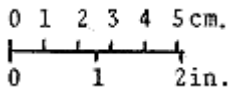


Fig. 2. Comparison of a right hind foot track of a captive male Mountain Lion estimated to weigh 90 kg (198 lbs.) with a track of an average size German Shepherd Dog (weight unknown).

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**MOUNTAIN LION**  
**Right HIND (Kitten)**



**BOBCAT**  
**Left HIND Foot**

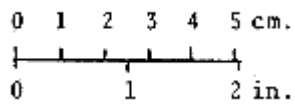


Fig. 3. Comparison of a right front foot track of a Mountain Lion kitten which weighed 8 kg (18 lbs.) with the left hind foot of a wild bobcat (relatively large track).

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**MOUNTAIN LION**  
**Right FRONT Foot**



**BLACK BEAR (Small)**  
**Right FRONT Foot**

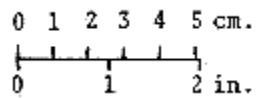


Fig. 4. Comparison of a right front foot track of a wild male (weight unknown) with the right front foot track of a small black bear (weight unknown).



Tools of the track trade: common plaster of plaster of Paris, water, mixing can, paper strips for the form and a track.



Form the paper strips and place them over the track.



One inch of the plaster-water mix is poured into the form.



After short drying time the cast can be lifted and the dirt cleaned off. Cast can be improved by painting track and background contrasting colors.